8

The Benefit of Oaths to civil Society consider'd,

694.9.7.
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IN

An ASSIZE

SERMON,

Preach'd before

The Hon. MARTIN WRIGHT, *Esq.*

One of the Justices of his Majesty's Court of *King's Bench*,

The Hon. Sir THOMAS ABNEY, *Knt.*

One of the Justices of his Majesty's Court of *Common Pleas*,

AND

The UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD.*

July 5, 1744.

By *RICHARD GREEN*, D. D.

Fellow of St. *John Baptist's* College, *Oxford.*

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SERMON,

PREACHED

IN THE CHAPEL

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

BEFORE THE

HONOURABLE SOCIETY

OF

LINCOLN'S-INN,

ON

FRIDAY, JUNE 8, 1787.

BY

THE HON. AND REV. SHUTE BARRINGTON, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM.

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TO

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AND

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One of the Justices of his Majesty's Court of *Common-Pleas*,

THIS

DISCOURSE

Is INSCRIB'D

With all Respect

By their most humble

AND

Obedient Servant,

RICHARD GREEN.

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EXODUS XX. 7.

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy GOD in vain, for the Lord will not hold Him guiltless, that taketh his Name in vain.

THE Fear of GOD, or a true Sense of Religion, is the grand Support and Security of human Society. It influences Men in all Cases, and in all Circumstances; and, if it had it's full and genuine Effect, as it ought, it would produce in Them an Observance of their whole Duty. Whereas every Principle substituted in it's Stead, as the Beauty or Reasonableness of Virtue, the Fear of human Laws, and the like, tho' by no Means to be undervalu'd as far as They extend either in their own Nature operate upon a few only, or effect That but in Part, which Religion does universally.

Indeed the Depravity of Mankind makes it absolutely necessary to supply, in the best Manner possible, the Want of Virtue by the Intervention of wholsome Laws. Yet, notwithstanding this Depravity, there remains a general Sense of Religion amongst Men; and, tho' it is frequently not attended to,

It can never be totally extinguish'd or forgot; It will recur upon many Occasions, and approve Itself to Men's unbiass'd Judgment, whenever They allow Themselves to consider. Otherwise our State, bad as It is usually represented to be, (And these Solemnities are a Proof, that there is too much Reason for the Complaints concerning the Wickedness of the World,) would be beyond Expression worse. The Confusion and Disorder and Distress, that would ensue, would be insupportable. And there would be more frequent and more melancholy Occasion for the Sword of the civil Magistrate; and after all no Provision could be made for those more numerous Cases, in which We are forc'd to place a Confidence in Others, and rely upon their Consciences, that They will deal with Us according to the Rules of Justice. But if this great Truth, which every Faculty within, and every Object without Us, demonstrates, be acknowledg'd, that there is a supreme righteous Governor of the Universe, Men can give each other the most reasonable Pledge of their Fidelity, Uprightness and Sincerity, and bind their Consciences in the strongest Manner by an Appeal to that Tribunal, at which their whole Conduct must finally be strictly examin'd, and equitably and impartially judg'd. And accordingly It has been the Custom of all Nations in all Ages to make such an Appeal, whatever their Notions have been concerning the supreme Being. This is the Foundation of an Oath, Which is a solemn Invocation of the divine Testimony to confirm the Veracity of our Promises or Assertions; and by Consequence a Renouncing the Mercies of the just Judge and Searcher of Hearts in Case of Falsification.

Nor can any Thing appear to natural Reason more warrantable, than the Use of an Oath, if It is required and enjoin'd by lawful

lawful Authority, or introduc'd on a becoming Occasion, as It contains a direct Acknowledgment of the infinite Power, Knowledge, and Justice of GOD.

It's Lawfulness might be further prov'd incontestably from the Scriptures (confirming the Dictates of natural Reason) by the Forms of Expression ascrib'd to GOD Himself and his holy Angels, by the Examples of holy Men and Apostles, and by the several Precepts relating to It. To name no more, The Commandment in the Text does not absolutely forbid Swearing, but only "Taking the Name of the Lord our GOD in vain", which is express'd again and explain'd in another Part of the Mosaic Law by "Swearing by his Name falsely". And It is observable, that true Religion is by no Mark more frequently describ'd, than by this solemn Act of It, † "Swearing by the true GOD". As It is the Characteristic of Idolatry ‖ to swear by Them, that are no GODS.

Lastly, as It appears from the Nature and End of an Oath, that It implies Nothing contrary to good Morals, as It is likewise highly beneficial to Men in the Affairs of Life, It must at least be lawful. But if It is further of necessary Use in civil Society, as It appears to be, It will follow, that It is not only lawful, but a Duty upon some Occasions.

I shall therefore at present consider,

1st, The Benefit of an Oath to Society, and What it obliges us to; Which will shew, What It is to take the Name of

* Lev. xix. 12. † Deut, vi. 13. ‖ xxiii. 7.

the Lord our GOD in vain in the ſeveral Inſtances, I ſhall mention.

IIdly, I ſhall briefly conſider the heinous Nature and peculiar Aggravations of this Crime. And

Laſtly, The deſperate Folly and imminent Danger of It.

Ist, It is with good Reaſon queſtion'd, Whether civil Society can ſubſiſt without the Uſe of an Oath. It is evidently neceſſary to the very Being of Society, that the Members of It ſhould place a Confidence in each other; and It is as evident, that their ſeparate Intereſts and irregular Appetites often prompt Them to violate this Truſt, when They can do It with Impunity. Now the Methods, whereby Men can give a legal Security of their Fidelity, ſo as to lay Themſelves under an Obligation in an external Court, and ſubject Themſelves to Penalties for the Breach of It, extend only to the ſmalleſt Part of their Commerce with each other. In other Caſes It is neceſſary in Order to keep up the Confidence, I have been ſpeaking of, to apply to Men's Conſciences, which can be done no Way ſo ſtrongly and effectually, as by an Oath. Therefore the Nature of Society requires, that We ſhould bind our Faith with this Bond in Caſes of Importance, thoſe more eſpecially, which relate to the Being or Welfare of It.

In Order to ſhew the Force of this Argument more fully, I ſhall proceed by Taking a View of the principal Uſes, to which an Oath is applied, and firſt with Regard to thoſe Relations between the Members of Society, which reſult immediately from the Nature of It, I mean thoſe of Rulers and Subjects.

The Uſe and Intent of the Oaths of Rulers, whether ſupreme or ſubordinate, is to oblige Them to be the Miniſters of GOD for the good of the People committed to their Care; to uſe their Power and Authority to preſerve and protect, and not to oppreſs their Subjects; to make Law, and Reaſon, and Equity, and not their own arbitrary Will the Rule of their Actions; to conſider, as well as their People, whoſe Authority They have, and, as GOD's Vice-gerents, to maintain Piety and Virtue, and to diſcourage Wickedneſs and Irreligion.

The higher any One's Station is, the leſs Reſtraints He is under, but thoſe of Conſcience, and the Fear of Him, Who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and the only Ruler of Princes. And therefore to ſupreme Governors It is an additional Obligation, to what other Men are under, to pay a ſtrict Regard to their Oaths, that there is no ſuperior Tribunal upon Earth, to which They are accountable; that no One * "may ſay to a King, what doeſt Thou?"

I would not be underſtood to inſinuate any Thing contrary to the natural or civil Rights of Men; Or to ſay, that, when Government ſo far degenerates from the End of Its Inſtitution of Protecting, as to be made the Inſtrument of Enſlaving Men, They are oblig'd tamely and paſſively to permit every Degree of Oppreſſion. The contrary Opinion I think moſt reaſonable, and well grounded, and conſiſtent with the general Precepts of Scripture. But this is a Point, about which Men are much

* Eccleſ. viii. 4.

divided

divided in their Sentiments, and which must be left to every Man's own Judgment and Conscience. Thus much however is agreed on all Hands, that It relates only to Cases of Extremity, and does not affect any of the Rights of Governors. And tho' ill-disposed Men may make a bad Use of this (and almost every other right) Doctrine, It will never be the Case, where there is an honest and good Heart. And upon this all Governments must principally rely for the peaceable Behaviour of their Subjects, whose Oaths come next to be consider'd.

As, I say, Governors must rely upon the Consciences of their Subjects for their Fidelity and Allegiance, They have an unquestionable Right to exact this Pledge of Them, and the Advantage of Government to Mankind entitles Them to It. And from hence *Solomon* draws a strong Argument to enforce the Duty of Subjects. * "Keep the King's Commandment, in Regard of the Oath of GOD", that is, We are not only under the common Obligations of Religion to perform this, as well as all other relative Duties, but We shall likewise incur the Guilt of Perjury, if We are bad Subjects. It highly concerns Us therefore to consider, What our Oath requires of Us.

To begin with the best Foundation of every Duty † "a willing Mind"; It requires at least Being well-affected to the Government, to which We take an Oath. Men frequently break asunder the strongest Bonds, When their Affections are directly opposite to their Duty. These are in their own Power, and depend upon the Resolution of their Will; They may with a good Grace give their Heart, where They have given their

* Eccles. viii. 2. † 2 Cor. viii. 12.

Oath,

ſtudy, If They ſet about It earneſtly, as the Importance of the Thing deſerves and demands. St. *Paul* preſſes the particular Duties of every Station upon this, the only Principle to be depended upon: * "Whatſoever Ye do, do It heartily, as to the Lord and not unto Men". And there are the moſt powerful Motives to ſway Us in the preſent Caſe. Not to inſiſt, that Diſaffection is a State of Mind very undeſireable; that to brave a legal Government, whoſe Protection We enjoy, (eſpecially our own, upon which our Religion, Laws, Liberties, every Thing, that is valuable, are acknowledg'd to depend,) It is not only ungenerous, but unwiſe. It is moreover inconſiſtent with every Notion of Honour, which has no other Foundation than Religion and Virtue conſider'd as reputable. And therefore St. *Paul*, when He enumerates emphatically every good Principle, that ought to influence Men, does not fail to mention it, "Whatſoever Things are of good Report". To which They muſt quit their Pretenſions, in this important Inſtance at leaſt, Who do not fix their Affections, where They have engag'd their Faith. If any One, notwithſtanding his Oath, keeps alive an old, perhaps hereditary Diſlike to his Governors, if He is diſpos'd in one uniform Manner to judge of, or rather condemn, all their Actions indiſcriminately, ſuch a One ſhould be upon his Guard, and ſuſpect, that poſſibly He may not be an equitable Judge. But It will be ſaid, do not Prejudices operate as ſtrongly, and biaſs our Judgments as much in Favour of Governors? It is readily allow'd. I am not ſpeaking in Defence of Prejudices. But whatever are the Conſequences of Them in this Caſe, not having the ſame Kind of Tendency, They do not fall under our preſent Conſidera-

* Coloſs. iii. 23.

tion.

tion. After all, every Caſe muſt ſtand upon It's own Bottom, and It is the Privilege of a free People to judge for Themſelves from the beſt Lights, They can get. But ſure It can never be improper, nay It becomes Us, to recommend Candour and Candour, where We are neither unprejudic'd nor competent Judges.

If, What has been obſerv'd concerning the inward Diſpoſition of the Mind, be juſt, It will eaſily follow, that the outward Behaviour ought to be correſpondent to It. That ill Acts of a ſeditious Nature, ſuch as Treating the Perſons of our Governors with Diſreſpect, Taking all Opportunities to diſtreſs their Meaſures, Inflaming their Enemies, Cooling their Friends, and the like, are inconſiſtent with our Engagements. A good Man will hardly think, He may allow Himſelf every Liberty, but the laſt of open Rebellion. It is Running too great a Riſk, and playing with Temptation, and may lead a Man unawares into Conſequences, of which (like *Hazael*) He could never have believ'd Himſelf capable.

In a Word, What I would inculcate, is this, That (Whatever a Man's Notions be concerning the Meaſures of Obedience) all the Reſpect, Deference and Subjection to the higher Powers, that are implied in It, are due to Them, to Whom He has taken an Oath. Theſe are *, the Powers, that be, that is, the lawful Powers, with Regard to Him at leaſt, and They have a full Claim to a willing, unreſerv'd, conſcientious Obedience.

* Rom. xiii, 1.

It

It cannot sure be difficult to convince any One of this, Who has taken an Oath to a Government, and therefore One would scarce think, the Character, I have been describing, belongs to any One. And in Fact We may be sure from the natural Sincerity and Generosity of the People of this Nation, (Who, if They are Enemies, chuse to be fair and open Enemies,) that It can belong to few, exceeding few in Comparison; and It has been disclaim'd by the public Voice of the Nation with Detestation and Abhorrence. *

To conclude this Head, to make light of our Oaths tends to destroy the mutual Confidence necessary to the very Being of Society, to sap the Foundation of Government, and to reduce Mankind to a State of War. Governors can take what Precautions, They think necessary for their Safety, against those, who refuse to give this Security. But against an Enemy, that will not scruple to enter into the same Engagements, as the sincerest Friend, there is no Defence.

Having consider'd the Members of Society as divided into Superiors and Inferiors, I shall now consider Them in the Light of Equals, namely, as having all an equal Claim to Justice, in the Administration of which, consists the next principal Use of an Oath. The Truths, by which the Fortunes, Reputations, and Lives of Men are to be determined, are often solely in the Keeping of, and must come from others. And from hence arises the most frequent Occasion of Requiring an Oath, as a Security against Men's Interests and Affections, and a Pledge, that They will neither falsify, nor conceal any Thing, where the Execution of

* In the Addresses to his Majesty this Year.

Juſtice is concern'd. And accordingly we rely ſo much upon It, that, whatever is ſworn, is preſum'd to be true, unleſs the contrary is prov'd. * "An Oath for Confirmation is to Men an End of all Strife;" which is the Apoſtle's Account of Its Inſtitution. And It obliges Us to partake of that Indifference and Impartiality, that Concern and Zeal for Promoting Juſtice, which conſtitute in ſo peculiar and diſtinguiſhing a Manner the Character of a Judge. Yet whoever is converſant in Teſtimony, and obſerves, how frequent contradictory Evidence is, muſt conclude, that (even amongſt Proteſtants) Men ſatisfy Themſelves with tacit Reſervations, Equivocations, and the like deceitful Subterfuges, which are repugnant to the Simplicity eſſential to an Oath, and inevitably lead Men into Perjury. Therefore They can never be too much upon their Guard againſt thoſe great Snares Intereſt and Affection, which wonderfully influence and pervert the Judgment. For this Reaſon the Pſalmiſt amongſt other Marks of a good Man ſingles out this, † "That He ſweareth to his own Hurt and changeth not." And again ſays He, § "Who ſhall aſcend into the Hill of the Lord? — Even He, that hath not ſworn deceitfully."

From what has been ſaid, It may appear, that an Oath is the Bond of Fidelity amongſt Men, and the Cement of civil Society. And on what other Occaſions, either public or private, It may be lawful, expedient, or neceſſary, It will not be hard to form a Judgment.

It is us'd with great Propriety to confirm public Faith, than which Nothing ought to be obſerv'd more inviolably. And how-

* Heb. vi. 16. † xv. 4. § xxiv. 3, 4.

ever

ever Politicians may imagine, that They are not bound by the Rules of ſtrict Morality, It is certain, that the Authors of national Breach of Faith are Sinners "above other Men," in Proportion as the Conſequences of It are extenſive. And therefore GOD denounces the ſevereſt Woe againſt *Zedekiah* for his Infidelity to the King of *Babylon*. * "Seeing He hath deſpis'd the Oath by Breaking the Covenant, — therefore thus ſaith the Lord GOD, as I live, ſurely mine Oath, that He hath deſpis'd, and my Covenant, that He hath broken, even It will I recompence upon his own Head." The Hiſtory of the Jews affords a ſignal and inſtructive Inſtance of the Regard due to public Faith in the Caſe of the † *Gibeonites*, tho' They had obtain'd a League by a Wile, and the Princes of the Congregation had ſworn to It unadviſedly. And ‖ GOD confirm'd It afterwards by exemplarily Puniſhing *Saul*'s Poſterity for his Violation of It. Good Faith and Sincerity therefore is the Glory of a Nation, no leſs than of private Perſons; and on the other Hand Fraud and Perfidy is It's greateſt Diſhonour. And if a Nation is diſtruſted by all It's Neighbours in Conſequence of Having deceiv'd all, that ever plac'd a Confidence in It's moſt ſolemn Engagements, It is juſtly infamous.

Again, to ſwear to the diligent and faithful Diſcharge of an important Truſt or Office, to the Obſervance of the good Rules and Statutes of particular Communities; or to make a ſolemn Vow at Entring into Holy Orders, are ſerious and becoming Occaſions of Interpoſing GOD's Holy Name, and highly conducive to the well-being of Society.

* Ezek. xvii. 18, 19. † Joſh. ix. ‖ 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

Laſtly, Even voluntary Oaths, tho' to be avoided as much as poſſible, are ſometimes lawful. As to voluntary Vows It is the ſafeſt Way to abſtain from Them wholly, as no Way contributing to the Benefit of Society, the great and ſole End, which juſtifies the Invoking of the divine Teſtimony, and being only needleſs ſnares to our Souls. Nor is any Encouragement given to this Practice in the new Teſtament. We read indeed of devout Jews, that * "enter'd into a Curſe and into an Oath to walk in GOD's Laws." And the Pſalmiſt ſays of Himſelf, † "I have ſworn and am ſtedfaſtly purpos'd to keep thy righteous Judgments." But theſe Expreſſions, and the like, rather ſignify general Reſolutions only of Obeying GOD. However, where It is neceſſary to obtain Credit, and there is no other Means of Doing It, Men may lawfully give a voluntary Oath, as a Pledge of their Veracity.

The Obligation, that an Oath lays Us under in theſe, and all Caſes, where It is of a promiſory Nature, is, not only to intend ſincerely at the Time of Swearing, but afterwards conſtantly and habitually to endeavour ‡ "to perform It unto the "Lord." Otherwiſe a promiſory Oath, eſpecially where the Matter of It is a known Duty, is vain in Itſelf. The Intent of It is to onerate the Conſcience more ſtrictly; nor is that anſwer'd, if, after We have taken an Oath, We think no more of It. § "If a Man vow a Vow unto the Lord, or ſwear an Oath to bind his Soul with a Bond, He ſhall not break his Word, He ſhall do according to all, that proceedeth out of his Mouth."

* Neh. x. 29. † Pſ. cxix. 106. ‡ Matt. v. 33. § Numb. xxx. 3.

Having

Having thus direct Proof both from Reaſon and Scripture, that an Oath is beneficial and [even] neceſſary to Society, I ſhall but juſt mention an Objection or two againſt the Lawfulneſs of Oaths, as They occur.

Firſt, The Danger of Perjury may be made an Objection againſt the Lawfulneſs of Oaths. But the ſame Kind of Reaſoning will hold good againſt Men's Being ever plac'd under Circumſtances of Temptation, impeach the ordinary Courſe of Providence, and bear hard upon Liberty of Action Itſelf, which yet muſt be allow'd, notwithſtanding It is liable to be abus'd: It is however a good Argument againſt Multiplying Oaths, or Requiring Them without apparent Neceſſity. But, whatever be the Caſe of the Impoſer, Who is to anſwer for the Exigency of, What He does, The Obligation upon the Swearer is not leſſen'd, if the Matter of the Oath be not in Itſelf abſolutely unlawful; Nor is the Guilt of Perjury extenuated in Him, that ſwears with Scruple and Doubtfulneſs.

Again, Some have interpreted that Precept of our Saviour, * "Swear not all", As if all Swearing was unlawful amongſt Chriſtians. But, beſides That general Forms of Expreſſion in all Books and in all Languages are to be underſtood with ſuch Limitations, as the Reaſon of the Thing requires, and accordingly are but ſeldom miſtaken, We have the Authority of † our Saviour Himſelf and the Apoſtles againſt this Interpretation. And further, that Swearing ſolemnly, or at the Requiring of a Magiſtrate is not meant, is evident from the very Context.

* Matt. v. 34. † xxvi. 63.

" But

"But let your Communication be, Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay;" Which determines It to Swearing upon light Occaſions in ordinary Converſation; a Practice highly criminal and greatly injurious to the Majeſty of GOD, which for It's Prevalence ought frequently and ſharply to be reprov'd, and againſt which the Wiſdom of our Law has provided ſevere Penalties.

Laſtly, It may be ſaid, if a general Senſe of Religion will not hold Men, that of an Oath will be but vain. But tho' there are ſome Men ſo deſperately wicked as to break aſunder the ſtrongeſt Bonds, It is certain in Fact, that even thoſe Men generally reverence an Oath, and are ſtartled at the Guilt of Perjury, Who are unaw'd by every other Conſideration. This is evident, as well from thoſe vain Subterfuges and Diſtinctions, wherewith They think to ſalve It and quiet their Conſciences; as from this, that many are ſo weak, as to think Themſelves oblig'd by their Oath to do a bad Thing, as was the Caſe of * *Herod*. Whereas in Truth not the Keeping, but the Making ſuch an Oath conſtitutes the Crime of Taking the Name of GOD in vain. And this general Awe, which Men have on their Minds for an Oath leads Me to conſider, as I propos'd to do briefly, in the

IId. Place, the peculiar Aggravations of this Crime.

The firſt and great Aggravation of this Crime is, that It is an open and preſumptuous Affront to the divine Majeſty. If It is inexcuſable ſo far to forget GOD as to fall into Sin,

* Matt. xiv. 9.

It

It muſt be exceeding ſinful to commit It daringly and with a high Hand, When We expreſsly remember Him. "All Unrighteouſneſs is Sin", but this is a Fault of the deepeſt Dye, of the moſt heinous and provoking Nature. It proceeds from ſome Notions, that diſhonour GOD, and do in Effect deny his Attributes; either his Truth, by Making Him a Party to, and, as far as in Us lies, a Patron of Falſehood; Or his Wiſdom and Juſtice as a Governor, by ſuppoſing, that He is indifferent to an Act of Fraud, and "careth for none of theſe Things"; Or his Knowledge, as if "GOD could not perceive It, and there was no Knowledge in the moſt High". Something of this Kind, which does not leſſen, but increaſe the Guilt, always lies at the Bottom.

Again, The Deliberation and Solemnity of an Oath increaſe (tho' not the Obligation, yet) the Guilt of Swearing falſely. Nor ought ſuch ſolemn Circumſtances and corporal Expreſſions of Reverence ever to be omitted, as tend to imprint upon Men's Minds a ſerious Senſe of, what They are doing. For this Reaſon, tho' all equitable Allowances will be made for the natural Frailty and Inattention of Men with Regard to promiſſory Oaths, there can be no Extenuation of the Sin of wilful Perjury in a Court of Judicature, nor can any be ſo deſperately guilty, but the moſt abandon'd of Mankind, * "Who", according to the Apoſtle's Expreſſion, "have their Conſciences ſear'd with a hot Iron".

The Holineſs of our Religion is a farther Aggravation of the Crime, ſince even the Heathens were ſhock'd at It. For the

* Tim. iv. 2.

ſame Reaſon Men's Capacities, Knowledge, Stations and Functions may be ſo many peculiar and perſonal Aggravations to Them. If ſuch, from Whom better might be expected, ſet a bad Example and caſt a Contempt upon their Oaths, the conſtant Doctrine of Scripture is, that They "ſhall be thought worthy of much ſorer Puniſhment". Which ſhews in the

IIId and laſt Place, the deſperate Folly and imminent Danger of this Crime, Which muſt be proportionable to the aggravating Circumſtances, that attend It. As ſurely as "GOD will honour Them, that honour Him", ſo ſurely will He bring Them to Shame and Confuſion, that offer an Indignity to his great and tremendous Name, and inſult his Majeſty. "He will not hold Them guiltleſs." This is a Caſe, which is expreſsly and peculiarly refer'd to the ſupreme Tribunal of the great and laſt Day, and for the moſt Part muſt eſcape all human Judicatures. And the infinite Perfections of the Judge, (of Whom earthly Magiſtrates are but a faint Type and Repreſentation,) are the moſt alarming Circumſtances. "It is a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the living GOD, Who is able to deſtroy both Soul and Body in Hell; Who is a Diſcerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart, and, Who will judge all without Diſtinction righteouſly and impartially, and give to every Man according to his Ways and according to, what He has done". Nay even † his Mercy, Lenity and Long-ſuffering, if abus'd, make Him more to be fear'd. Thus, where GOD is ſublimely deſcrib'd under the Character of Goodneſs, this Notion is remarkably in-

† Pſalm cxxx. 4.

culcated.

culcated. * " The Lord GOD, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in Goodneſs and Truth, keeping Mercy for Thouſands, forgiving Iniquity, and Tranſgreſſion, and Sin,—— and that will by no Means clear the guilty". ‖ And of the Lamb Himſelf, our merciful Judge, the Wrath is deſcrib'd as terrible. Therefore for Sins, that are wilful, preſumptuous, and contrary to Knowledge, (of Which kind is Perjury, in the higheſt Degree,) unleſs effectually repented of, It is declar'd, that ‡ " there remaineth no more Sacrifice, but a certain fearful Looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation —— from Him, that hath ſaid, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompenſe".

And now that Religion is the Support of Society, can there (amongſt others) be a ſtronger Proof, than the Subject before Us? Could Rulers and Subjects, Or Man and Man in many Caſes confide in each other, without an Appeal to the ſovereign Governor of the Univerſe? What could be ſubſtituted in It's Stead to end " Strifes" and Diſputes? Would It be ſafe to truſt the Event of every Cauſe to the Teſtimony of Evidence unſworn? In a Word, would Men dare to unite in Societies, if there was no GOD for good Men to invoke, and for bad Men to ſtand in Awe of?

To conclude, Let all, both Magiſtrates and People, fulfill their reſpective Engagements, (the one Ruling, the other Obeying) " in the Fear of the Lord", " remembring, that They ſhall all ſtand before the Judgment Seat of GOD". Let thoſe, Who profeſs a Love of the Liberties of their Coun-

* Exodus xxxiv. 6. 7. ‖ Rev. xiv. &c. ‡ Heb. x. 26. 27. 30.

try, (a Paſſion, which, under due Regulations, cannot be too much encourag'd,) ſhew, (as every Principle, as far as It is right, muſt be conſiſtent with every other right Principle,) that They come behind none in Loyalty. And if there are any, Who join ſlaviſh Principles with a factious Behaviour, Who, notwithſtanding the moſt ſolemn Abjurations, diſcover by their Words and Actions, that They deſire an Event, which would inevitably bring Deſtruction to "the Conſtitution of this Proteſtant Kingdom" both in Church and State, let Them take away the Reproach for the Future.

And ſince (next to Acting right) the moſt neceſſary Thing for the Welfare of Society is a regular and impartial Adminiſtration of Juſtice, let all, Who are concern'd in this Buſineſs in any Capacity, contribute their utmoſt to this End, as their ſeveral Oaths require. Laſtly, let Us of this Place, as We are oblig'd by our Functions, and the Deſign of our Inſtitutions, which We have ſworn to obſerve, make It our principal Care, together with uſeful Learning, to inculcate a ſerious Senſe of Religion, wherein our greateſt Glory always has conſiſted, as It always muſt. So ſhall * "the Fear of GOD" (like a good Root) ſhew Itſelf forth in thoſe comprehenſive Branches of our Duty, "the Love of the Brotherhood, and the Honour of the King".

Now to GOD the Father, GOD the Son, and GOD the Holy Ghoſt, be render'd and aſcrib'd, as is moſt due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion both now, and evermore. *Amen.*

* Pet. ii. 17.

F I N I S.